



Extra Story - The Illustrious Sage, True Lord Erlang (Part 1)

[&]quot;Great misfortune huh..."

Looking at the strip of fortune telling paper he had drawn on a whim, Godou muttered.

Since he was not a superstitious person who believed in fortune telling, Godou's only response was to smile wryly.

This happened on his way home from school, when he visited the Nezu Shrine by chance.

"Oh dear. Something interesting is written here."

Erica commented beside him as she looked at the fortune in his hand.

In contrast, Erica, who had also come along for her fortune, had drawn the impeccable outcome of "great fortune."

"The one who keeps watch, the nemesis is coming. Matters of conflict, evasion would be good fortune. —Isn't this predicting a desperate situation in the next battle?"

"That so?"

Godou replied nonchalantly and shrugged.

"I believe that avoiding conflict with any kind of god would be considered good fortune. That's definitely correct."

Less than half a month had passed since the battle against the heretic god with the monkey appearance in the land of Nikkou—on the plains of Senjougahara.

The invincible war god with vast divine powers and carrying the attribute of steel. In terms of pure combat power, he was the most powerful opponent Godou had ever fought to date.

However, Godou had also faced off against deities on the likes of the ancient Middle Eastern divine king as well as the goddess of wisdom who concealed a true serpentine nature.

Oh well, they were pretty much all the same in the fact that every single battle was very difficult.

In other words, a seven-hundred-story building looked pretty much the same as a seven-hundred-and-fifty-story building when viewed from the ground. Something like that.

In response to Godou's sloppy perspective—Erica simply went "You're not incorrect" but supplemented:

"However, I am very interested in the one described as Godou's 'nemesis.' Although your nemeses seem to number many, in actual fact, that's not always the case."

"Well, after all, most heretic gods simply do as they please, so their crimes eventually catch up to them."

Realizing what Erica was getting at, Godou answered.

As a Campione, the authority Kusanagi Godou wielded consisted of Verethragna's transformations, the [Ten Incarnations]. Each incarnation had its own stringent usage conditions, such as requiring the target to be a great sinner who had caused the people to suffer, etc.

Moreover, in general, most [Heretic Gods] committed atrocities repeatedly without being self-conscious of them.

Furthermore, Godou's source of power, Verethragna the guardian god of justice, could be described as the nemesis of such evil.

In terms of compatibility, one could conversely describe Godou as the nemesis of heretic gods instead.

In particular, both the white stallion that destroyed the people's enemy with scorching flames as well as the warrior who wielded the sword of light for tearing apart evil gods could be considered powerful trump cards against the majority of gods.

But Godou realized at this moment that the other girl in his company looked like she wanted to say something.

Namely, the girl who had drawn "middle fortune."

"What's the matter, Mariya?"

"No, nothing much, just something slightly concerning..."

The prim and proper Yamato Nadeshiko answered vaguely as if feeling rather troubled.

However, Godou encouraged her to speak, casting a glance that said "Go on and tell me." Yuri timidly spoke up:

"After listening to your exchange just now, I keep getting an uneasy feeling. I wonder if Godou-san might in the near future encounter an opponent with rather unfavorable natural advantages—an existence akin to a nemesis..."

The Hime-Miko Mariya Yuri possessed the power of [Spirit Vision].

Compared to drawing great misfortune, the fact that Yuri felt something "concerning" meant far more to Godou. Falling into silence, Godou exchanged glances with Erica beside him.

Was yet another troublesome battle coming in the near future...?

In hindsight, this was perhaps the incident's starting point.

The next day after the fortune drawing—

Godou and Yuri were heading to the Arakawa ward together after school.

They were both in uniform because they headed straight from school. This was not some personal matter. Otherwise, the blonde and silver-haired girls would probably have followed along.

However, those two girls had matters they had to attend to separately today.

The girl who had appointed herself as Godou's grand chamberlain was set to meet up with them slightly later. But before that, Godou and Yuri were alone together. Godou could not help but feel quite shy. After switching to the train, they reached the station closest to the destination and finished the journey on foot.

Although Godou did not ask, he felt that Yuri must surely be feeling the same way.

Walking side by side, they exchanged few words, most probably affected by the mood. Both Godou and Yuri were unaccustomed to the opposite sex. This was obvious from the current atmosphere.

However...

Very incredibly, Godou did not feel uncomfortable in spite of that.

Walking shoulder to shoulder, the distance between Godou and Yuri was slightly too intimate if they were merely fellow students from the same school.

Separated by only centimeters, all Godou had to do was reach out slightly if he wanted to touch Yuri's hand.

"I-If little children were in this situation, perhaps they would hold hands..."

Yuri suddenly whispered softly, bowing her head shyly.

Were Erica in her place, she would probably have taken Godou's hand directly as she spoke.

However, the Yamato Nadeshiko beside him was probably not going to do something like that. Instead, she smiled with a shy expression on her face. Godou smiled gently in response.

This was enough. Somehow, he always felt a sense of mutual connection in their thoughts and feelings.

Ever since the commotion at Nikkou city, this feeling persisted between Godou and Yuri.

Despite talking little, there was a sense of solace as they walked casually together, their destination entering into view.

This was a certain shrine not far from the Sumida River.

There were a few dozen people gathered on the visiting road beyond the entrance torii.

It happened to be the day of a temple fair, hence the many stalls present.

One could find the usual stalls selling takoyaki, roasted sausage, fried pancakes with assorted vegetables, cotton candy, chocolate bananas etc.

"This sight makes me a little nostalgic. I feel like buying something to eat."

"Is that so? In that case, let us go check it out later."

Yuri suggested in response to Godou's unintentional mutterings.

Godou immediately nodded to concur. But compared to a temple fair, they had more pressing matters to deal with first. Yuri proceeded to walk in front, leading Godou to their destination.

The pair left the lively and bustling visiting road and passed through the protective forest.

Entering the confines of the shrine, Godou could not find any signs of the priests and shrine maidens who were supposed to be present. Perhaps they were busy with various tasks and managing the temple fair.

However, there was probably an additional reason why the shrine personnel could not be found.

Namely, they voluntarily stayed away, knowing that the Devil King Campione was visiting on this day—

"I've been waiting for you, Onii-sama!"

Coming out from within the shrine to greet them was a young girl dressed in a mike outfit.

Mariya Hikari. Despite being a sixth grader, she was an apprentice Hime-Miko who possessed the special power of [Disaster Purification]. In addition, she was Yuri's younger sister.

"All the preparations are ready. Please come this way."

Hikari was a precocious girl, wise beyond her years.

Smiling cheerfully, she displayed affection as she nimbly led Godou and Yuri towards the worship hall. Godou nodded and followed behind her together with Yuri.

The interior of the worship hall was quite vast but rather dimly lit. Naturally, it was of wooden construction.

Furthermore, there were a few strange objects here—rather, there were dozens of them lined up.

White statues bearing human form.

Upon careful examination, these solid shapes were made of salt.

All were male with ages ranging from twenties to forties. The expressions on the salt statues' faces displayed surprise or fear. Most of them were dressed in suits.

For an instant, they felt like living humans. Such was the realism exhibited by the exquisite detail of these salt statues.

"These people, could they all be members of the History Compilation Committee...?"

"Yes. They were the ones who were transformed into statues of salt by the Marquis' authority when Marquis Voban came to Japan back in June..."

Yuri answered Godou's question.

The most ancient Campione, the Marquis—Dejanstahl Voban had visited Japan for the purpose of obtaining Mariya Yuri's rare and exceptional spirit vision.

After Godou fought him to a "draw," the Marquis had returned to Europe—

These salt statues before Godou's eyes were his parting gifts.

Pierced by the demonic gaze of Marquis Voban's glowing eyes of emerald, everyone was transformed into salt.

This was the authority that the elderly Campione had usurped from a certain demonic deity.

"The Eyes of Sodom... That was what the Witenagemot named this authority."

The History Compilation Committee's Amakasu Touma had explained this yesterday.

"According to reports, all it took was one glare to turn living humans entirely into salt... Furthermore, if the Marquis felt like it, he was capable of turning thousands or even tens of thousands of people into salt instantly. All the people who witnessed the city of Sodom's destruction by God's flames were transformed into pillars of salt—This authority was named in reference to its simple ability to recreate the story recorded in the Old Testament of the Bible."

Amakasu normally displayed a inexplicably delighted expression whenever he said anything profound of this sort.

However, he was speaking with a helpless tone of voice when he delivered the explanation yesterday.

Furthermore, he was the one who made the request to Godou, asking him to attempt neutralizing the effects of the demonic gaze.

"I seem to recall it being said that it was a power usurped from the deity Balor?"

"Is that it...? Somehow, that is not the feeling I get..."

Godou muttered as he looked at the salt statues standing haphazardly before him while Yuri whispered cautiously.

"Could it be, you saw something?"

"Y-Yes. One-eyed... Body clad in armor. I think it should be ancient—a divinity from European lands. A one-eyed war god...?"

Yuri stared behind the salt statues.

The mike with exceptional spirit vision should be able to discern the appearance of the deity who supplied the authority that had been applied to the salt statues. Speaking of which, Godou recalled something in particular.

Marquis Voban was synonymous to the authority of "wolves."

This was a power that appeared to stem from one of the monstrous wolves of Norse mythology, but in actual fact, it was an ability usurped from the Greek god of the sun, Apollo.

"That old gramps was already a Campione before the Witenagemot's founding, so the information back then might not necessarily be accurate..."

On the other hand, Yuri's vision powers, which were capable of catching partial glimpses of the truth despite a total lack of clues, should be praised greatly instead.

If that was the case, perhaps Yuri might be able to discern more important information?

As Godou cast an inquiring gaze at her, Yuri shook her head apologetically.

"That is all I can currently see. The sacred name of the god who created this authority still eludes..."

"I guess Verethragna's [Sword] can't be used after all."

"However, I can indeed see that the curse placed by the Marquis has weakened compare to before. In that case, perhaps the method Amakasu-san suggested might succeed in lifting it."

Godou nodded at Yuri's comment.

Did the effects of Campiones' authorities weaken with the passage of time?

With this question in his mind, Godou decided to test things out.

During the period after the battle against Voban, Godou had obtained a new power despite the fact it was not his intention.

"Hikari, after we absorb the power as much as possible, the rest is up to you."

"Yes. Leave it to me, Onii-sama!"

Mariya Hikari agreed cheerfully.

The spirit power she wielded, disaster purification, was the special ability to neutralize all magical power and wizardry. Even the authorities of gods or Campiones could be nullified in part.

Naturally, it did not have the power to erase Marquis Voban's authority.

But if they did it this way...

If this curse of salt which had weakened for some unknown reason was further drained by Godou, then—

"Ama no Murakumo, please."

Godou spoke softly to his right arm, where the divine blade Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi resided.

This was the "partner" he had obtained after the commotion in the Netherworld. After surviving the battle at Nikkou, Godou had come to a basic understanding of how to use it.

This divine sword, with its long history, possessed the trait of magical power absorption.

Using this divine sword to absorb the magical power applied by the Marquis' authority, the curse of salt transformation could very well be weakened substantially.

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi suddenly manifested in Godou's hand.

It took on a form that could just barely be considered a Japanese sword. The gently curved blade was quite similar to that of a katana, but was in actual fact the recreation of an ancient Japanese blade called the Warabite-tou.^[1]

In addition, Ama no Murakumo's blade was an ominous jet-black color—

Godou casually made a thrust with the dangerous-looking "partner" known as the divine sword.

"Let me absorb the power remaining from that old gramps!"

"Efficacious signs of the bearer of Fortune, I implore your manifestation!"

As Godou gave orders as he wielded the divine sword, Hikari also chanted spell words to use her spirit powers.

There was a reason why the people who were turned into salt statues had been transported to this particular shrine. Reportedly, this place worshiped as its main deity Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi's guardian—Haya Susanoo no Mikoto.

Apparently, going to suitable lands was necessary to increase the divine power of Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi.

It was mentioned earlier that members of the History Compilation Committee had gathered at this place to perform wizardry rituals. As the divine sword's blade released its power, Hikari also applied her spirit powers.

In the next instant, Yuri's eyes widened with surprise.

Although the current time was before five in the afternoon, the sky had already begun to darken.

Having completed their task, Godou and Yuri were walking along the shrine's visiting road.

People were gathered around the fair stalls in bustling crowds.

Wandering aimlessly among them, Yuri turned towards Godou with a gentle smile on her face.

"It went quite smoothly for now. Quite a relief."

"Oh well, hopefully there won't be any lingering side effects in the future."

Combining Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi and Hikari's spirit powers, the intended result was achieved.

After receiving a phone call from Amakasu who was currently absent due to handling other tasks, they were informed that he was coming to settle remaining matters once he became free later.

Before he arrived, Godou and the girls decided to tour the shrine festival first.

Hikari went off to change from her miko outfit to casual clothing, thus leaving Godou and Yuri alone together.

"I'll simply go buy some food from the stalls to take care of dinner. I think grandpa and Shizuka both said they were coming home late tonight."

"Shizuka-san? But there are no activities at the tea ceremony club today."

"She said she had some kind of promise to fulfill."

Godou and Yuri conversed as they strolled through the festival at a leisurely pace.

Whenever their gazes met, Yuri smiled calmly.

Without saying much, they simply enjoyed each other's company with a sense of inexplicable delight. Surely Yuri was feeling the same thing. Speaking of which, since they had come directly from school, both of them were still in uniform.

Taking a detour on the road home from school to spend time peacefully with pleasant company.

This was precisely the lifestyle of ordinary—or rather, normal students. Just as Godou was struck by this realization that a high school student was not supposed to experience...

Yuri tugged at the sleeve of his uniform.

"G-Godou-san. Over there is..."

"What's up, Mariya... Uh, why on earth would she be here?"

Godou shifted his gaze in the direction indicated by Yuri.

A fried noodles stall.

The girl tending to the stall was standing before a massive iron griddle, a spatula in each hand, boldly and vigorously stir-frying a great amount of Chinese noodles, bok choy, pork and other ingredients.

Dressed in a yukata, she resembled a delivery girl with great sense of presence. She was someone whom Godou knew very well.

"Shizuka, what are you doing here?"

"Ooh—? Onii-chan and Mariya-senpai!?"

The little sister looked up with an expression of surprise. This was a chance encounter at an unexpected location.



"I am helping out because of old man Asakusa's request."

Shizuka explained as she stir-fried noisily.

Her bold and vigorous stir fry technique, which contrasted greatly with her slender feminine physique, was taught by the aforementioned old man who lived at Asakusa—an elderly man who could be described as the Kusanagi siblings' distant relative, now already deceased.

Unlike grandfather Kusanagi's Casanova ways, old man Asakusa was an upstanding son of Edo. [2]

Although he lived a life of solitude and never married, his commercial business "Ichiya" was inherited by someone who stayed in touch with the Kusanagi family.

"Come to think of it, these stalls are also run by the Tekiya guilds." [3]

"Tekiya... What kind of business is that? I have never heard of it."

Naturally, while the siblings chatted about their relative, the one who inquired was the sheltered highborn lady unfamiliar with worldly matters.

Before Godou could answer Yuri's question, the younger sister swiftly motioned with her eyes. Do not explain in too much detail—That was what her gaze seemed to be saying.

"...Anyway, it's the job of setting up stalls at various festivals and fairs."

"...They even go to the beach during summer and ski locations in winter."

"Well, it sounds like an interesting job."

Yuri displayed a pure and innocent smile in response to the siblings who evaded the topic of a certain unnamed profession and business that "was barely considered a legitimate business nowadays."

As a side note, the old man mentioned by Shizuka was a celebrity who had opened a new era as a gambler in his youth, with a Kurikara dragon tattoo on his back. Even VIPs from the "industry" attended his funeral.

"If you told me beforehand, I could have helped out as well."

"Considering how busy you've been lately, Onii-chan, the phone call was only made to me. Oh well, after all, you'd simply reject the request anyway."

Shizuka's adorable face cast a severe glare at Godou.

Feeling her disapproving accusation, Godou replied with displeasure.

"Don't go throwing random accusations. Even for me, if an acquaintance made a request..."

"Onii-chan, are you having a date with Mariya-senpai today?"

"D-Date!?"

Shizuka's observation caused Godou to jump in fright.

"Idiot. How could you say something like that?"

"Look who's talking. Let me ask you, what else could it be?"

Glaring severely, Shizuka spoke.

"Without even going home first, you came here directly after school. Just the two of you. The situation is plain as day."

"...."

Godou fell into helpless silence. Yuri also gulped.

Only when Shizuka pointed it out to them did they realize that the current situation was rather difficult to explain clearly.

It was not as if they could honestly say they came to the shrine here to clean up a mess left behind by the old monster from eastern Europe, right? But were Godou to attempt deception, he would be in trouble once he got home later.

Just as he was about to give up, Godou remembered.

The oracle Yuri had received a few days ago. About meeting a nemesis in the near future or something like that. Could it be referring to Shizuka?

But for one's own little sister to be the nemesis seemed a bit much... Just as Godou muttered such words to himself—

Yuri suddenly spoke up beside him.

"E-Excuse me... Godou-san, Shizuka-san, a so-called date refers to the act of a male and a female going out together to enjoy a delightful time together... Is that correct?"

Yuri sought confirmation in a greatly flustered manner.

For such a basic question to be asked when things had already come to this, not only Godou but also Shizuka were stunned. The two siblings nodded emphatically at the same time.

Then Yuri suddenly said the following with a surprised expression:

"What should I do... I, today is my first date..."

"Eh!?"

"B-Because it was just Godou-san and me, the two of us, like this, together all this time—"

Wrong, totally wrong! Didn't we agree that your little sister Hikari was coming along slightly later?

Feeling compelled to voice these words, Godou was just about to speak. However, when he noticed Yuri's inexplicably happy expression despite her flustered state, he could not bring himself to deliver the words for some reason.

"A-As I thought, this could be considered our first time experience, right..."

"W-Well, perhaps so... Maybe."

"I-I think so too."

"R-Really?"

"S-Should be?"

As her slightly moistened eyes pleaded, even Godou found himself reacting in unexpected ways.

Instantly, he nodded. I suppose one could view it that way. Thinking that to himself, Godou had a subtle feeling. But very quickly, he would forget all about such matters.

Because he saw Yuri smiling with happy satisfaction, which naturally caused the corner's of Godou's lips to move in turn. The end result consisted of Godou and Yuri smiling as they exchanged gazes right in front of Shizuka.

"Guh...! I can't believe you're completely ignoring the fact your younger sister is watching!? Even grandpa hasn't reached this level yet!"

Shizuka began to get angry on her own, greatly increasing the forcefulness of her noodle stir-frying motions.

In terms of colorful and abundant female relationships, the grandfather was unparalleled in his Casanova ways.

Godou frowned in response to Shizuka's use of this problematic character to prove her point.

"Grandpa simply avoids letting his family witness the behavior he's ashamed of. As for Mariya and me, we're just good friends. There's nothing to feel guilty about."

"Ah yes, there is nothing about the relationship between Godou-san and I that does not hold up to public scrutiny."

Godou asserted and Yuri immediately concurred.

Ever since the Nikkou commotion, Godou and Yuri as well as Liliana started attaining a sort of secure state of mind in this area of mutual agreement. Was it because the cohesion of shared destinies had intensified, or they had simply started to accept things...

"A-Although lately I've been getting the feeling you're advancing rapidly along a shameless rascal's path, Onii-chan, I never expected even Mariya-senpai to get involved, given her inexperience in worldly matters! Onii-chan, this sort of growth and development is a bit excessive—"

"Instead of talking about this, aren't the fried noodles ready?"

"Oh no."

Reminded by her older brother, Shizuka immediately calmed her wrath. Holding spatulas in both hands with great familiarity, she packaged the large amount of noodles into separate plastic containers.

Not being picky eaters could be said to be the virtue shared by the Kusanagi siblings.

No matter the quantity of food filling the dining table or how unpalatable cuisine they faced, not only the brother but also the sister possessed the special skill of eating everything without wasting anything.

"Stop acting all lovey-dovey before me, okay. Onii-chan, regarding your indiscretions in female relationships, there are countless examples I could point out to show your need for restraint. Anyway, leaving the topic for now, would you like to eat some of this?"

With a seemingly generous tone of voice, Shizuka gestured towards a packed serving of fried noodles.

"Oh, please rest assured, Mariya-senpai. Despite the small size of this type of stall, all the ingredients bought are very clean. Also, I use water that I brought here myself by bucket rather than dirty pipe water. Hence, there are absolutely no hygiene issues."

Indeed, the junk food sold at stalls did seem quite ill-suited for the high-class lady. Despite Shizuka's domineering personality, she was actually quite considerate of others.

She must have been making use of the labor provided by "old man Asakusa's young employees" who were originally stationed at this stall. Seeing none of them around, Godou presumed Shizuka had ordered them to go buy something or other.

As she listened to Shizuka's words, Yuri's eyes began to shine—

Godou suddenly felt his body suddenly shake and fill up entirely with power.

This was his body's preparation for an imminent battle.

Because he sensed a deity nearby who must be defeated, as a god-slayer—a Campione, his body and mind had entered a combat state.

"...Sorry, but Mariya and I still have things to do. We'll come over again later."

Godou immediately looked at Yuri. Possessing spirit senses more keen than anyone else's, the Hime-Miko also sensed the divine presence and nodded instantly in return.

"Excuse us, Shizuka-san. We shall be back shortly."

"Oh okay. Oh by the way, Onii-chan, don't you go bringing Mariya-senpai over to anywhere strange, okay!"

Godou left the stall together with Yuri who was bidding his sister goodbye seriously.

Listening to the reprimands coming from behind them, they gradually left the visiting road where the temple fair was being held and entered the protective forest.

Despite having no idea what was going to happen, Godou decided it would be best to go somewhere with fewer people around.

Godou and Yuri ran rapidly through the silence of the mixed forest.

They decided to head towards the shrine interior for now. There should not be any people in this direction apart from the Hikari and the History Compilation Committee members. Just at this moment, Yuri yelled loudly.

"Godou-san, look over there!"

Godou turned his gaze towards where Yuri was looking—a dark area deep in the mixed forest.

Amidst the darkness, Godou discovered a pair of refined and distinguished eyes. Just eyes only. Nothing else could be seen. No figure. Only two eyeballs floating in the air.

Moreover, the moment Godou sensed a divine presence from this pair of eyes—

A third eye opened. Above the pair of distinguished looking eyes, at the position corresponding to the forehead of a human face, a third eyeball appeared as a vertical slit opened.

At the same time, Godou was greatly stunned.

The massive expanding magical power always ready in a Campione's body—That magical power was suddenly reduced by 20%.

Godou instinctively felt that the third eye had taken the power. Taking away from the Campione's body the magical power that acted as the source of his authorities—What sort of deity had manifested with this kind of trait?

Just as Godou began to ponder the situation in preparation for the coming battle—

"O Bow of Jonathan, the warrior's weapon swift as an eagle and strong as a lion—!"

The spell words of David resounded all around.

An arrow of blue light flew from behind Godou and Yuri, aiming at the third eye that just opened. With astoundingly splendid archery, this eye was pierced right through.

"Are you okay, Kusanagi Godou!?"

The archer sprinted forth, accompanied by this stern voice. Without needing to glance at her face, Godou knew she was the silver-haired knight who had agreed to converge later—Liliana Kranjcar had finally arrived.

Godou nodded greatly in response to the appearance of this reliable comrade.

He then turned his attention to the enemy with the mysterious "eye." The three-eyed god who appeared in the depths of darkness had already left without a trace.

"What on earth was that thing just now..."

"Illustrious Sage—True Lord Erlang..."

As Godou's muttering escaped from his lips, Yuri responded in a tiny voice. Instantly, Godou turned to look at the Hime-Miko who was displaying a frightened expression on her beautiful face. Was it because she saw something?

True Lord Erlang.

This was the instant when Godou first heard this curious name.

—To be continued...

References

- 1. ↑ Warabite-tou(蕨手刀): a sword used by the Ainu people which influenced the development of the katana.
- 2. ↑ Son of Edo: Edo was the former name for Tokyo which rose to prominence as the stronghold of the Tokugawa shogunate. Renamed Tokyo after the imperial family regained power and moved there, it became the new capital of Japan. In short, "son of Edo" refers to a native Japanese man born and raised in Tokyo.
- 3. ↑ Tekiya(的屋): itinerant Japanese merchants who, together with gamblers, were the predecessors to modern yakuza.

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